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In the reign of Elizabeth, the Welsh herald Griffith Hiraethog visited this place about the year 1565, and the notes which he made of the coats of arms, preserved in the Hengwrt Library, are now (1879) in the possession of Mr. Wynne of Peniarth. The number of heraldic devices in various rooms, which he mentions, indicate a residence of greater consequence than the existing remains would lead one to expect. Sir Edward Leighton, the then representative of the family, was twice Sheriff of Shropshire and twice of Montgomeryshire. He was knight of the shire, member of the Court of the Marches, and Custos Rotulorum of the county. He entertained here for a fortnight, in 1584, his distant kinsman, the Earl of Essex, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth. Blakeway, in his *History of Shrewsbury*, vol. ii, p. 380, thus notices his visit: "Book of Orders of the Corporation, March 24, 1584.—Agreed that our Bailiffs shall bestow on the Earl of Essex, intending to pass through this town as to-morrow, in cake, wine, etc., to the valewe of 20 shillings." This great peer, so soon to become the favourite of his mistress, the "admiration and regret of Europe", was now in his eighteenth year, and on his road to Wattlesborough Castle, whence he

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Passing on to the era of the civil wars, the owner of Wattlesborough was, fortunately for himself and his estates, a minor, and took no part in the struggle, though his cousins, Harcourt Leighton of Plash, and Leighton Owen of Bragginton, were staunch Parliamentarians. At the Restoration Robert Leighton was returned Member for Shrewsbury, and sat in the longest Parliament on record, namely, from 1661 to 1678. His son, Sir Edward, the first baronet, was the last of his family who lived at Wattlesborough. He was Sheriff in 1693; contested the representation of the county in the Williamite as opposed to the Jacobite interest in 1695, when the numbers at the close of the poll were: Richard Lord Newport (Williamite), 281; Edward Kynaston (Jacobite), 157; Sir Edward Leighton (Williamite), 147. From the smallness of the numbers polled there is little doubt but that Sir Edward retired from the contest under a compromise, for he was returned, unopposed, with Edward Kynaston in 1698, and afterwards sat for Shrewsbury. He died married Dorothy, daughter of Sir Job of Ludford, M.P. for Ludlow, and Speaker of Commons. Since his time the Castle has been inhabited as a farmhouse.

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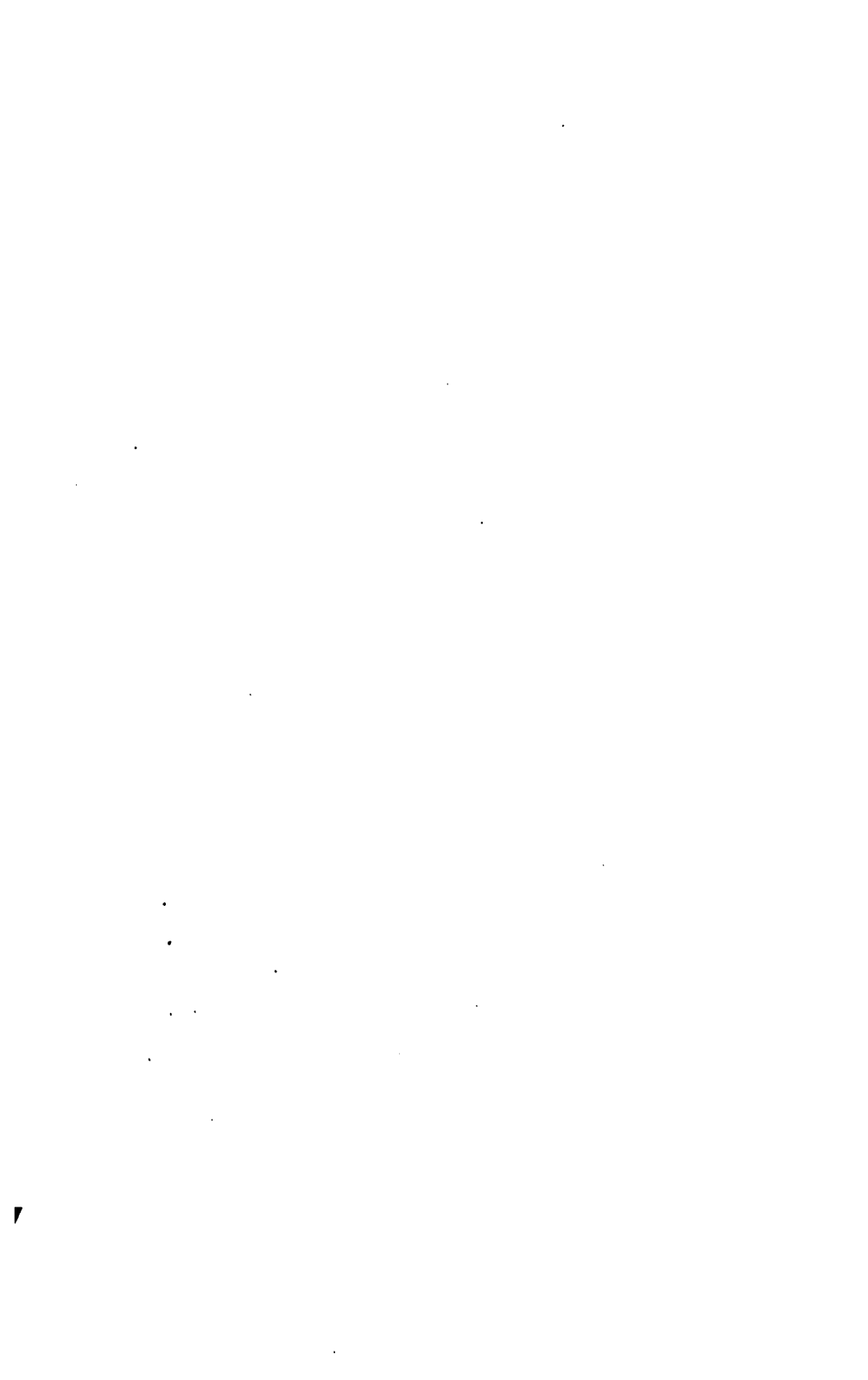
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JAN 31 1948



